

I ran a radio station in the '70's, when we recognized the public interest in airwaves, and were required to broadcast public service programming. Access to airwaves and the ability to disseminate important local information are critical to an informed populace. If media ownership is concentrated without recognition of public interest, that interest inevitably suffers.

Four suggestions:

1. Restore "public interest" requirements for media owners, concentrated in the local license or trade areas of each owned station, print publication or cable service. Make time and space requirements INCREASE in proportion to revenues, and to the number of outlets owned.
2. Require broadcast and print outlets to provide free time and space to accredited candidates from four parties at least in pre-primary time periods. Let discussion and debate flourish before candidates are locked into competitive positions, in order to surface important, if not necessarily popular, issues.
3. Require public service announcements and program promotions in at least 5% of prime time. Do not let vital local public service information languish in small-audience time periods.
4. Limit major market media ownership to 10 markets, and two outlets in any single major market.

As our world continues to become more complex our citizens require MORE, not less useful local and national information, and more time in which to understand and debate it. Consolidated ownership necessarily reduces awareness of and concern for local issues. Dispersed ownership at the least increases competition for attention and thereby improves opportunities to serve vital public needs for information, discussion, variety.